



1963

# Case History: Some Responses of Teachers to Their Major Challenges in a Changing Neighborhood Elementary School

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## Recommended Citation

Brown, H. Sumner, "Case History: Some Responses of Teachers to Their Major Challenges in a Changing Neighborhood Elementary School" (1963). *Master's Theses*. Paper 1834.  
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**CASE HISTORY: SOME RESPONSES OF TEACHERS TO THEIR  
MAJOR CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING  
NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**by**

**H. Sumner Brown**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts**

**Fall Semester**

**1962**

## LIFE

H. Sumner Brown was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 4, 1932.

He attended public elementary and high schools in Chicago and, following graduation, attended Northwestern University - School of Journalism in Evanston, Illinois, from 1950 to 1952. He transferred to Chicago Teachers College in 1952 and received a B.Ed. degree in 1954.

After two years of military service in the U. S. Army (1954-56), Mr. Brown took an assignment as a permanent teacher in the Chicago Public Schools.

In 1960, Mr. Brown enrolled in the Graduate School of Loyola University, with the goal of achieving a M.A. degree in Education.

The author is presently employed by the Chicago Board of Education, and teaches elementary school on the south side of Chicago.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I

#### Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to attempt to show the pressures, questions, and situations that are put to teachers in a school where the population is changing from one class and race to another. It is by no means an attempt to generalize or set down universal truths about such a situation, but is only a specific report of a school and faculty and presents only the problems and actions of this faculty.

This thesis is a sociological case study. Because it concerns only the faculty of one specific school (though in some depth), it is a qualitative rather than a quantitative study. Also, for the reason just assigned, it is not involved with statistics. The techniques used, as well as the limited sample involved, preclude such usage.

The purpose, then, is to illustrate or crystallize specific factors in a specific situation for their own value, which is believed by the author to be considerable, and the subject worthy of more detailed study in a wider area in view of the sociological implications and the tremendous impact this problem presents to educators today.

### II

#### Objectives

In this thesis the main intent is to determine the following:

First, an effort will be made to locate the source or sources from which spring the attitudes and behavior of the new students in the school. The basic belief that is to be pursued here is that the child at the school is a victim as well as a product of his environment and actually at the mercy of the attitudes of his family, environment, community, and race.

The second objective is to determine if there is a form, pattern, or trend in this change, mainly to satisfy the curiosity of the author and some interested associates who feel that as these new children are assimilated into the school and remain for a time they become more co-operative, better behaved, and harder working.

A third objective is to determine, if possible, if the school would have undergone the same upsets and suffered the same problems had the student population changed from middle class white students to lower class white students.

### III

#### Procedure

To achieve the ends set forth above, a guided interview was planned (and replanned) and, in the fall of 1962, twenty-one teachers of the Erewhon School were interviewed by the author.<sup>1</sup>

These teachers represented a total of 374 years of teaching experience of which 221 years had been spent at the Erewhon School. This averages out to eighteen years experience and ten and a half years experience at the

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<sup>1</sup>The interview form may be found in the appendix in the back of this thesis.

school.

Several of these teachers had taught for twenty or more years. Specifically three teachers had taught for over twenty years, five for over thirty years, and two held the record with forty-three and forty-five years of teaching experience. The record of experience in the Erehwon School itself was thirty-eight years.

Some teachers interviewed had, naturally, less time than five years at the school. In one case, the experience was only one year. However, this teacher had attended the school as a student some years before so his remarks were considered pertinent if not a little more insightful than others.

The faculty of the school at the time the change occurred numbered twenty-five. Discounting transfers, retirement, and death, twenty-one of these teachers were interviewed.

The teachers interviewed regarded themselves as members of the middle class, and live in neighborhoods which they considered middle or upper class. This is a fact which will be of importance in the report.

The thesis which follows is based on these interviews plus minutes of teachers' meetings dated and saved by the author for such an eventuality as this, the records of the Erehwon School, and occasionally an interview with a merchant or family in the neighborhood who are friends of the author through several series of circumstances it is not necessary to go into.

Each chapter is made up of the results of these interviews plus some documentation and anecdotes which were remembered by some member of the faculty and passed along to the author at the time of the interview or previous to that time.

The documentation is not extensive in the thesis itself although the bibliography is extensive. The explanation for this lies in the fact that much reading and preparation had to be done by the author to frame both the thesis and the guide for the interview. Without the help of the books and articles in the bibliography the interviews on which this thesis depends would have been a series of fishing expeditions, totally beyond anyone's power to tabulate, assemble, and interpret as has been done.

#### IV

##### Scope

The scope of the thesis is the scope of the Erehwon School and its sphere of influence. The thesis intends to examine the school, faculty, and students, and the parents and community as well.

The period involved is the period of the change. This began in February of 1959 and continues today, although basically the change was almost complete by February of 1962. This three year period is the one this thesis is concerned with.

The only limitation is the concealment of the real name and the location of the Erehwon School and the anonymity of the teachers interviewed. This, in a manner of speaking, was all the author had to pay for the interviews.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SITUATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE SCHOOL

#### I

##### The Community and the School

The Erehwon Public School is located in a heavily populated area in a large mid-western city. It is in a neighborhood that was, five years ago, composed of middle class white residents. Since that time, the neighborhood population has changed, and today it is almost one hundred per cent Negro. This occurrence is the "change" which this thesis will refer to and, in certain areas, deal with.

The student body of the Erehwon School is not yet one hundred per cent colored, although it may someday become so. The teachers interviewed for this thesis gave a number of reasons why some of the former residents have remained.

The basic reason for remaining appears to be one of economic necessity. The neighborhood is largely made up of private homes, and a number of families cannot or will not sell. Some home owners remain because they cannot get what they consider a good price for their homes. Homes in the area are well built, structurally sound, and of very high quality,<sup>1</sup> and the residents find they cannot get enough money from selling to buy or build a new house. They are, in many cases, too old to get a mortgage from a bank or be a good risk for a

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<sup>1</sup>Determined by interview and personal inspection of some of the residences by the author.

loan; and some are just afraid of going into debt again as they did in the 30's.

There is, of course, an element of sentimentality involved in these reasons. And there is a slight feeling of helplessness because some of these people don't know where to go. They have lived in the area all their lives; they have neighborhood contacts; church affiliations (a strong reason); they work in the area; and it is convenient and close to shopping and transportation.

Some families apparently lack the funds or income to move even on a rental basis into a different — and more expensive — neighborhood. In fact, the Erehwon School has received some new white children in the midst of the change whose parents cannot afford to live anywhere else.<sup>2</sup>

Another reason is that the school district of the Erehwon School crosses a major thoroughfare, and the colored have not settled on the other side of it. Thus, a small number of white children from this area (24 in 1962)<sup>3</sup> attend the school.

The Erehwon School has been long established in the neighborhood and faculty-parent relations have been exceptionally cordial and strong. Because the neighborhood has been very low in transiency, in many cases both parents and children have attended the school and been taught at least in part by the same faculty.<sup>4</sup> The school is also rated as one of quality teaching. In fact,

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<sup>2</sup>Deduced from parent interviews.

<sup>3</sup>Teachers' Meeting, February, 1962.

<sup>4</sup>Parent interviews, loc. cit.

on one occasion, white parents went to the central office of education to protest a reduction in the boundaries of the school because they wanted their children to remain at the school because of its good educational reputation.<sup>5</sup> This also accounts for some white families who remain in the area until their children graduate from the school and then move.

Such is the basis for the present membership of the Erehwon School. The large majority of its students are Negro (73%), and there are small percentages of white (2.4%), Oriental (0.5%), Puerto-Rican and Mexican students (24.1%).<sup>6</sup>

During the past three years the membership of the school has greatly increased, and with it, the number of transfers in and out. The school has been enlarged at great expense and more enlargements are being prepared for now at still greater expense. (The word exorbitant comes to mind at some of the figures which will be quoted later.)

The school has had classes meeting in the halls, and the library has become a classroom as well. Regular classes, however, have not been held in the assembly hall because the assembly hall is also the gym and is usually so employed.

## II

### The School Building

The Erehwon School is the third building of that name to occupy its

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<sup>5</sup>This incident was informally told to the faculty by a member of the administrative branch of the school.

<sup>6</sup>Erehwon School Records.

present site. It is of fairly recent construction (1939) and boasts of glazed brick interior walls, lockers in the halls, fluorescent lights (which are frequently broken accidentally accompanied by a loud tinkling of glass and gasps from the assembled class), a well equipped science laboratory, a large and well filled supply room, and a large number of audio-visual devices which have been stolen on a few occasions and returned again less frequently.<sup>7</sup>

### III

#### The Faculty

The faculty of Erehwon School is mostly white. It is a very friendly and congenial group of teachers of varying ages and years of experience in the profession. The turnover of teachers is very small, but there has been an increase in new teachers recently mainly because of the new addition rather than by the transfer, retirement, or resignation of assigned members of the faculty.

In connection with the faculty, it might be mentioned that the Erehwon School usually has a group of student teachers assigned for the semester. This experience is apparently mutually satisfying and frequently these same people come back to the school as regular teachers.

An indication of the closeness of the faculty is found in the annual faculty dinner, which is held in a nearby hotel every spring. The number of school teachers, past and present, who attend this affair is almost double the count of the regular faculty. Two previous principals attend regularly as do

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<sup>7</sup>A matter of school and police records.



a large number of teachers who have been transferred to other schools or who have retired.

The majority of the faculty is female, but in the last few years many more men teachers have come into the school. At the present time, men make up about 20% of the faculty, with the assistant principal at the top of the list.<sup>8</sup>

#### IV

#### School Operations

The Erehwon School operates on the departmental system in the seventh and eighth grades with separate teachers for English, social studies, mathematics and science. Each teacher is responsible to his own class for reading, art and music. In addition the whole school is organized into a so-called 'grouped reading' period of forty-five minutes length three times a week. In this program children shift from their own room in small groups to any one of a number of other rooms where children assemble who have the same or similar reading grades, regardless of the actual age and grade of the child ordinarily. The purpose of this is to operate a sort of crash remedial reading program by having a whole room work on the same exact work and progress together rather than have several small reading groups in one room with none of them able to gain the full advantage of the teacher. This program has been in operation for one year as of this date, and the results have been mixed and inconclusive.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Information of general knowledge to the faculty.

<sup>9</sup>Information on school organization and procedures on record in the school.

The part of the reading program dependent on the library has fallen behind because, as was remarked earlier, the library has been converted into a classroom. So this last year, as the principal remarked, "Our librarian has been on wheels." At library period the librarian goes into the classroom with a cart containing books appropriate for the children in the class. The children then can come up row by row, return their old books, select new ones, and return to their seats. According to the librarian, this is both advantageous and disadvantageous.

The advantage is in that the child is limited by grade level and can not go and pick books suited for a lower grade which are easy for him to read. Instead he can only take books at his grade level, and this has proven helpful. So far as is known it hasn't stopped slow readers from taking books out. Whether or not they read them is a matter of pure conjecture.

A disadvantage in connection with the above is that the selection of books is very limited -- the limitation being the capacity of the book cart. When a child requests a certain book, of course, the librarian tries to get it, but this is far from the fun of discovering new books and authors about whom the child has no advance information. Another disadvantage is that an advanced reader has almost as little opportunity to read books higher than his grade as the poor reader has to read below his grade.

Another limitation in the library operation is in the realm of research. The library is stocked with elementary encyclopedias and reference books, and children used to be encouraged to use them during library time or in other free periods, and a section of the library was reserved for this work. The library books are now shelved in the adjustment teacher's office,

which is only about 12' x 12' without its present compliment of cabinets, shelves and desks, and thus is a little restricted for large independent projects. Furthermore, there are few children the librarian feels she can trust in the room alone, and the adjustment teacher is frequently out carrying out his duties.

The most important disadvantage to the librarian is simply that the classroom is not a library. She argues that the elements in a library are not present in a classroom. The children are at individual desks rather than tables; they are noisy and not prepared for a period of quiet reading. In short, little reading is done, and too much discipline is needed; this hurts the library program.

## V

### Extracurricular Activities

In addition to the regular school day, the Erehwon School operates a social center on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 P.M. to 5:30 P.M. with classes in gym (dancing), room games, corridor games, and crafts. These activities are well liked and so heavily attended that it is necessary to eliminate many who desire to come.

There also are occasional tournaments held after school, such as intramural basketball. Unfortunately the gym is so small that there is little room for spectators. The children are very enthused about it, however, and wait outside to get the play-by-play story by vocal relay.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>A matter of record and general faculty knowledge.

## VI

## Conclusion

This is the background information on the Ehrenson School; its history, plans, limitations, programs and operations. This information is important to the paper because everything that is discussed is colored by the preceding pages. Every action of every teacher in the school is partly dependent on this background which she has assimilated and uses in her actions either willfully or unwittingly.

This thesis is concerned with this teacher, but it is concerned also with the changing neighborhood and how this operates on the teacher. The background information is valuable, but the real importance is in the dynamics of the change itself, how it was manifested, and what the reactions of teachers were. This is the next thing to be considered.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CHANGES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The information contained within this chapter was collected during the interviews of teachers during September and October of 1962 as described in the introduction. The section of the interview entitled "Changes in the Neighborhood" (see appendix) is the section used to elicit the responses referred to.

#### I

#### Reasons for the Change

In discussing the change in the neighborhood, it becomes important to consider the reasons why the Negro race has moved into this area. It is important because the motives and actions of the family group are reflected in the school situation; and, thus, the school situation cannot be fully understood until these motives and actions are explained.

Although there was some disagreement between those interviewed, the general idea seemed to be that the change of the neighborhood was foreshadowed by an influx of lower class white families and minority groups, including a large number of Orientals — mainly Japanese. (One teacher with wide experience in the schools said that the Oriental influx was a sign that Negroes would move into the area. She gave examples of it happening in other sections of the city to support the statement.) This alteration in membership preceded

the beginning of the change by about two years.<sup>1</sup>

The basic reason the Negro moved into the area is one of numbers, although it was expressed in many different ways in the interviews. "Overflow from other areas", "Left homeless with land clearance projects", "Follow the leader", and "Be with own people" are the terms used to explain this population change. The picture is one of a need for better housing and less crowded living quarters -- for a better environment. There is also a desire for status involved with the other motives, for moving into this area apparently gained status for many of the new residents.

Some interviewed teachers compared the shift to emerging from a ghetto. Others touched on the political implications and discussed the methods used by the first Negro families that moved into the area to ensure their remaining. One teacher commented that Negro ministers often give great impetus to such influxes because they desire the newer and better (and debt free) churches located in these areas.

The large houses in the neighborhood were ideal for subdivisions into smaller units, according to the teachers interviewed, and the neighborhood itself was a fringe area, being located on the edge of a much larger Negro section of the city. The availability of transportation, the convenience of location and, of course, the quality of the school were added inducements for the change.

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<sup>1</sup>The Orientals have almost all left the school by now. The teacher who made the above statement said they were afraid of the Negro race.

## II

## Faculty Observations During the Change

From the very beginning the faculty of the school was alert to the change. In interviews they remarked that they had "seen it coming" or that it was "obvious" what was about to happen. Some were very watchful and worried because of friends they knew who lived in the area. Others were interested because of the school and how it would be affected by the change. Even some teachers who claimed not to be alert revealed during the interviews that they had seen and heard a great deal during the transition and that this had to be assimilated and interpreted in reference to the school.

The first indications of the change came into existence. There was more talking about it in the neighborhood, more worry, and a "tension that could be felt." A few people quietly moved out.

During the next three years, Negroes moved into the area. During this period many changes were noticed. There was more noise in the neighborhood; broken glass and trash began to accumulate in yards and gutters. Maintenance and improvement of buildings was virtually non-existent. Broken windows were not fixed; curtains (where they were present) were usually ragged and dirty. There were more people on the streets during the day, a large number of whom were men who apparently had no regular employment.

The large apartment buildings were the first ones occupied by the Negroes. Once these were fully occupied the "For Sale" signs went up rapidly. Many businesses which had been in the area for a long time moved out to new locations. (Several boys who remained at the school during and after the

change traveled about two miles to see their original barber, a gentleman named Phil.)

Businesses which remained changed their stock to some extent. Some started new lines as well to catch as much business as possible. A large hardware store, for instance, started a very profitable sideline selling lumber to people who were remodeling their houses (or subdividing them).

Several bars were open for longer hours — as observed by teachers driving by or waiting for buses. Some of these displayed "Under New Management" signs, showing that new business men were entering the area. A long established drugstore, still under old management, suddenly blossomed out with windows virtually covered with signs of reduced prices on sundries — all surrounding a sign announcing "We Honor State Aid Checks".

There were several changes in stores. Many eating places were opened, mostly of the lunch counter variety. Food and liquor stores took over old business establishments. There was a heavy increase in beauty parlors. In two cases, stores had their windows painted black and became "churches" of strange, self-styled denominations. Several stores remained vacant with forlorn "For Sale" signs in the dusty windows.

An interesting aspect of the change was in the automotive line. Although the people moving in seemed generally of a slightly lower class than those leaving, there was an increase in the number of cars in the neighborhood and an increase in the number of children driven to and from school by their parents or relatives.

However, there is another aspect to this. Cars were abandoned more often in the neighborhood. They were parked, all useful items were removed,



and then they just sat there. One car was abandoned outside the school (across the street). After several motionless months, the police were called. It took about a month, but eventually the car was towed away.

Cars were not just abandoned at the curb, however, they were driven into the vacant lots and left there. Some of these lots began to resemble auto graveyards with several dismantled remains of autos parked every which way in the weeds.

There was a physical increase in the population, although no new buildings were built. There was a high increase in the number of children attending school. A check of addresses in the school showed many large families were living in small apartments or part of a private residence. Where one or two children had lived with their parents before, now as many as six or eight or more were living with perhaps only one parent.

One house was of special interest to a teacher (for undisclosed reasons). She noted the appearance of side doors and new windows indicating the house was being subdivided into living quarters for several families.

Some old families remained in the neighborhood for various reasons, as was mentioned in Chapter I. Some have remained through the three years of change and are not about to move. This attitude apparently is resented by some of the new residents.

A private source reported that every few days during the change different Negroes would come to her door and ask her the price of her house. When she told them she had no intention of selling, they would reply, "But you got to sell; this neighborhood's changing."

This source also reported that during a cutback in relief checks in the

early summer of 1962, she experienced the first weeks since the change when there were no all night poker parties next door. This is an indication of the attitude fostered in this area where Erehwon School is the educational force.

Another aspect of the new residents was revealed when the buildings behind the school were condemned in order that the school could be enlarged. The property was purchased at a cost of \$238,875. The wrecking company that won the job of tearing down the old buildings submitted a bid of \$9,240.00 and salvage. It soon became apparent that there would be no salvage worth mentioning. Daily the teachers watched people from the neighborhood gut the buildings virtually brick by brick. Trucks pulled up in the alley and hauled away whole windows complete with frames, sinks, toilets, sections of steps and barnisters, mailbox and buzzer installations and similar items. Two garages were carefully torn down, board by board and removed, and additional lumber from the buildings was removed for other projects. All this happened between the time the buildings were vacated and when the wrecking company arrived. What salvage is there in a doorless, windowless house where even the pipes and electrical wiring have been torn out of the walls?

As these changes were observed by teachers, other things were learned and duly passed among the faculty. Teachers who visited homes brought back stories of holes in the wall, exposed wiring, broken windows with rags in them, scant and shabby furniture, cramped and dark rooms, improperly clothed parents and children, odor, dirt, and oftentimes parents who were drunk.

Children would come to school weakened and sick and reveal that their parents had not been home for several days, and there was no food. One boy washed his one set of clothes every night and ironed them himself in the

morning so he could be well dressed at school. The truant officer told of finding children absent from school at home, healthy and in good spirits with no parents or responsible adults around. On one occasion she talked about an apartment inhabited entirely by dogs, the door wide open and no humans around.

The class strata of the community went from lower middle class to lower class, generally speaking, although there were and are certain exceptions to both categories. From a community of home owners, the area around the school turned into a community where many more rented than owned — and rented small, dark parts of apartments.

Teachers were surprised at the number of "father unknown" enrollments that came into the school — a category they had never had occasion to use before. They found that the parents' lives were no longer centered in the school. More fathers (or "uncles") came to school to enroll children and to visit teachers. There were also more cases where both parents worked — but the type of job was unskilled labor rather than skilled or professional employment. Teachers also noticed notes and excuses coming from home were illiterate, another thing that had never happened before.

A great number of parents reported they were unemployed. Many mothers were on ADC — and teachers reported that there had never been any parents on ADC before, or no more than one in the school on infrequent occasions. It was estimated that at least 26% of the children in school in 1962 had parents on ADC, and several teachers stressed this was a conservative estimate.

One mother on ADC whose husband disappeared five years ago was having a child a year. One of our teachers remarked she was staying away from this woman's house because "there must be something in the air around there". In

another case a self-styled minister, "appointed by God", impregnated three members of his congregation, which seems somewhat irreligious.

These, then, were the differences brought about in the community by the change. Or perhaps it would be correct to say the changes noted by the teacher whose concern was the school, the classroom, the individual child, and doing her level best for each of these.

Here was the first adjustment the teacher had to make. The change in social class and contingent changes in attitudes, motives, and objectives was severe to the middle class teacher. The relations between teacher and community, which had formerly been unusually close, became strained and distant. Teachers who formerly had worked long past 3:00 P.M. were afraid to remain at school after dismissal and would not enter the community at night.

The parents also were strained in their relationships with the faculty and kept them, in most cases, to a minimum. A stalemate existed — neither side, apparently, was able to bridge the gap, to make the first overture toward the co-operation necessary for optimum education of the children.

Then, too, these alterations in the community brought into the classroom a new type of student whose actions, attitudes, and more were borrowed from his elders. These new students brought new problems to the classroom teacher, and outside the classroom they seemed in some ways very different; and in some ways very like the students at any school.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENTS

The information for this chapter was also obtained from the teacher interviews that were collected during September and October of 1962. The section of the interview entitled "Characteristics of Students" (see appendix) gives the questions that were used to structure this chapter.

#### I

#### The Basic Challenge

There was practically 100% agreement on one point in connection with the pupil -- the discipline problem is the fault of the parents and the home, and any remedial work must therefore start there.<sup>1</sup>

"Parents don't discipline their children", "Home discipline is bad", and "No parental discipline" appear in virtually every report. The feeling centers around the statements that the parents do not discipline their children at all (or if they do, it is very erratic), and therefore the school must assume this duty. In many cases, the school is expected to perform this disciplinary function. The parents are "not aware of how children should behave and function in the school, and they feel the school should teach them proper behavior."

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<sup>1</sup>Wilma G. May, A Teacher Views the School Crisis (New York: Pageant Press, Inc., 1956), pp. 140-44.

The result of this parental attitude is that the child receives discipline in the school only and therefore becomes resentful of the school and the teacher because they are symbols of an authority he does not want and is not accustomed to. He is torn between the values of the home and the values of society as reflected by the school, and his inclination is toward the path of least resistance and the way his family goes. Therefore, he resents any demands made upon him that are contrary to these inclinations and resents the teacher who represents this authority.

The problem created by this conflict cannot be overemphasized for it is the basic challenge that faces the Erehwon School and every other school with the same transitional problems.<sup>2</sup> The depth of feelings engendered in the children is regarded by many teachers as the basis for most of the discipline and behavior problems in the school as well as problems in attention and good performance in the classroom.

## II

### Overview of Student Behavior

Prior to the change the Erehwon School had a highly organized system of students entering the building and moving quietly, single file down the halls, the girls from one end of the building and the boys from the other, to their rooms. The children would begin by lining up in the schoolyard according to room and entering in a predetermined order.

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<sup>2</sup>James B. Conant, Slums and Suburbs (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 23-27.

At the beginning of the change there was little or no change in this order. However, as the Negroes became the majority group, the orderliness began to break down. In a number of interviews teachers insisted that discipline began to break down in the schoolyards and during passing at least as soon as there was a predominance of Negroes enrolled -- many felt it was sooner.

There was a basic lack of self-control which was present in all grades and was especially noticeable in the lower grades. There was much pushing and shoving in lines and downright refusal to line up. There was a great deal of running through formed lines and breaking them up, apparently just for the fun of being disruptive.

Over a period of time this behavior increased until the line-up bell, which was the one minute warning for the passing bell, was virtually ignored; and many children remained in the yard until they were chased into the building by a teacher.

There was less neatness among the students, teachers reported. Floors were constantly littered with paper, and papers were found in desks, lockers, and virtually everywhere but in the waste baskets. Again, this is something which is not uncommon to many schools, but the Erehwon School had always been very neat, and this was very irritating to the teachers; then, too, the volume of waste paper was exceptional.

The halls became more noisy during passing, especially when compared with the dead silence that used to be commonplace during this time. There were also occasional outbursts of violence which accompany the theory of "he hit me so I hit him back-harder". Cries of "he's buttin'" and "he's pickin'"

indicated classmates were butting into the line or "picking on" (fighting) someone else.

There was also a larger amount of noise when classes changed. When two classes passed in the halls, greetings were exchanged with the fervor of inseparable comrades who had not seen each other for five years rather than fifty minutes. Once in a while these friends would slip into the washroom with the hope of spending the ensuing period there. Usually this was an unsuccessful endeavor.

At times an edict, an appeal, a plea, or an order from a teacher, a group of teachers, or teachers and principal together could completely stop or at least greatly reduce this disorder. In a few days, however, it returned to its former level.

But this sort of thing is merely an annoyance to the teachers, and it has little effect on teacher morale or attitude, according to interviews. There were several more important changes in behavior of the children that were much more serious.

### III

#### Theft

Theft was one of the biggest problems. Teachers all agreed that there was an increase in theft in and out of school, and several commented that there had never been any theft that they knew of before the change.

Crayons and scissors turned up missing in lower grade classrooms, and it became necessary to count textbooks daily, if not hourly, to make sure none were missing. Things were stolen which were of no value to anyone outside the



faculty, such as a key that locked and unlocked a moveable stage in the gym.

The stealing was not, therefore, done entirely out of need. What was stolen in many cases was discarded or given away. Apparently the fun was in the stealing -- and the new children in the neighborhood were quite proficient.

Stores in the area began to be troubled with shoplifting, and grocers began putting even the larger bundles of foodstuffs out of reach.<sup>3</sup> One boy was kidded by his classmates because he had stolen two left hand gloves from a store rather than one glove for each hand.

Money was also taken. Teachers carried their purses with them everywhere, and those who forgot paid ten to twenty dollars for the omission. At least four teachers had money stolen; and in one case it was in excess of fifty dollars. Fortunately, some of the children reported who stole the money -- or who was suspected; and this, plus faculty detective work, usually succeeded in learning who the guilty party was. Usually the money was gone, but disciplinary action against the culprits was as severe as possible.

Another incident involved the theft of a wallet from one of the janitorial staff who left his regular trousers hanging in a maintenance room. This particular theft took a good deal of nerve, because it occurred in an area where students are not permitted and in a room adjacent to the engineer's office and a teachers' lounge.

Petty theft -- stealing other children's money, cheap watches, pens, and miscellaneous school supplies -- occurs with alarming regularity; and there probably is much more that is not reported. There is also stealing from

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<sup>3</sup>Personal interviews with two storekeepers in the area.

parents and friends. One father complained to the school administration that his boy was alone at noon; the boy was bringing home his friends who stole all manner of things from the apartment and broke what they couldn't take.

At the time of this writing three upper grade boys, two of whom just graduated, are awaiting trial on charges of auto theft — the case continued from May 17, 1962.

In another case several boys stole a gun from an apartment at lunch time. Just who was responsible never was determined, but one of the boys was shot and killed while the children were playing with the gun.

Another money-making activity was a protection racket, which preyed on younger children who paid money to avoid being beaten up. Also, last year a boy was suspected of peddling pornographic literature. A close watch was kept and a scrap of evidence (literally) was discovered once, but nothing was ever proven. The boy has since graduated.

#### IV

#### Violations of Private Property

Another problem was a lack of respect for private property. Many residents complained of groups of children playing on lawns, ruining hedges, and scattering trash and garbage in streets and driveways. Children also would walk through private yards and climb fences, although signs requested them not to, in order to avoid going to the corner and around the block to get to the schoolyard.

Children also gathered in the foyers of apartment buildings and would sit in the halls creating a great deal of noise. They played on the steps and

around exterior fixtures of churches and other public buildings; they climbed on garage roofs and ran riot through old, condemned buildings (often breaking all the windows) that could collapse at any minute. Such things went far beyond the "mischievousness" of Tom Sawyer and became downright malicious and dangerous. They were upsetting and annoying to faculty and residents alike.

The tendency to gather and travel about in large groups was deplored by faculty and police. Large groups of boys and girls would gather in front of the school at lunch or afternoon dismissal and talk, dance, laugh and annoy passers by. Finally the police had it announced throughout the school that the area around the school was to be cleared within two minutes of dismissal time. It immediately became imperative for every student to wait for his younger brother or sister or cousin to take them home. However, when the police began cruising by in their cars, the children moved away from the school; now they go at least a block before grouping up.

## V

### Fighting

Also much deplored by teachers is the amount of fighting carried on in and around the school. There has been a great increase in fighting since the change began. Originally some of this conflict was between white and Negro, but now it is between Negroes. As one teacher expressed it, "Fighting in the Negro society here seems to be an accepted form of relationship."

The fighting is bitter, cruel, and harsh — much worse than that which previously occurred around the school. In the case of girls it is particularly vicious for it involves kicking and hairpulling; usually a girl is lucky if she

just looses a handful of hair and some skin on her face.

Fights in the schoolyard are considered a great deterrent to discipline. A fight will draw over 200 children out of room lines and into a tight circle around the combatants. This makes it difficult and dangerous for teachers to get in and break up the fight, and even then the children remain in a state of excitement for the balance of the day.

Similarly fights on the children's way home can be seen and stopped because of the large group that gathers. Often these fights are instigated by an exchange of several notes in class, each one a little nastier, usually motivated by a third party. Finally the location and time for a fight is arranged, and notes fly inviting everyone to the massacre.

## VI

### Sexual Problems

The awareness of sex and sexual connotations among the Negroes apparently starts at a rather early age. Kindergarten and first grade teachers reported that several songs and stories had to be dropped from their repertoire because the children snickered over imagined "dirty" references in the texts. The same problem is reported to exist in lessons in higher grades over pronunciations in phonics.

In the upper grades there are a number of boys who can't keep their hands off girls. One boy tried to pull a girl into the boys' washroom at the end of the school day not long ago. The school has also maintained over recent semesters an average of one girl absent because of pregnancy. The present semester is no exception.

## VII

## Physical Condition

There is a disturbing number of children who come to school without breakfast, and some who have missed more than one meal. Even more disturbing to some teachers are the children who buy their breakfasts on the way to school and come into the yard with a bottle of pop and a bag of potato chips, which constitutes their breakfast. There is something sickening in watching an adolescent guzzle down sixteen ounces of Pepsi Cola at 8:30 in the morning. It also lacks nutritional value.

## VIII

## Conclusion

These, then, are the children — the challenge of the teachers. They are different than the children that previously attended Erehwon School. The feeling is that they have not changed for the better; that they lack self control and a strong moral code, and that they are more aggressive, volatile, and "hard to reach" than their predecessors.

As was stated earlier this is largely due to parental attitudes and training. Herein lies the major problem, for communication and understanding between parents and faculty is both strained and restricted.

So it is the students with whom the teachers must cope. The teachers must cope; they must stand firm or give up. The teacher must do as much as possible with the children in her class despite their attitudes and abilities (or lack of same). To fail to do so would be to cease to be a teacher.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TEACHER, THE SCHOOL, AND THE CHANGE

As in the previous chapters, this chapter is built around the teacher interviews of September and October, 1962. The section of the interview entitled "Teacher - School - Change" contains the questions used for building this chapter.

#### I

##### The Increase in Membership

The first classroom evidence of the change, aside from the color of the new students, was a steady rise in membership. In a year classrooms were overcrowded, and students continued to come in at such a rapid rate that finally kindergarten admissions had to be stopped until the following year.

Indicative of the increase is the fact that from 1945 to 1955 the overall school enrollment rose from 495 to 496. In February of 1960, the change having begun the previous year, the enrollment had almost doubled, totaling 907 students. By the end of the 1961-62 school year, total enrollment was 1,165 with a projected total enrollment of 1,250 expected for the following September.<sup>1</sup>

Overcrowding, of course, is not limited to changing schools, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Teachers' Meeting, June, 1962.

suddenness of this upsurge did make adjustments necessary. Also, the fact that the newcomers were of a different race made these adjustments rather severe -- and entailed an additional emotional burden on the teacher.

When the colored came in, there was, at first, a lot of open resentment from white students, many of whom had not been troublesome before. Teachers remarked that even when there were but few Negroes in the class, they seemed to "lack their usual control". Discipline was a great problem in these rooms of "wall - to - wall children" because the crowding in itself creates a certain amount of unrest and friction and noise. But in addition to resentment and crowding, the new children were poorly equipped for school; they were tardy frequently; they were irresponsible, noisy and often defiant.

Not only was it difficult to get many new students to bring necessary supplies, the school had trouble keeping up its end of the supply line as well. Rooms which had adequate books, seats, and materials for thirty or thirty-five pupils were hard put to seat and supply forty or fifty or more. In time additional equipment and books arrived, but in between the need and the supply classroom organization and discipline slipped.

There was more noise in the rooms, more of what are regarded as "nuisance discipline problems", and more children who came late -- or didn't come at all. Teachers said they were "disciplining instead of teaching" and that they frequently had a "feeling of getting nowhere" with the classes.

With all the increases, there were decreases. There were fewer papers that could be accurately and fully graded, less "enrichment" in the program, and less committee type work because of the size of the classes and the need for constant attention and control. It was not unusual to see teachers taking

advantage of every spare minute to try and keep up with the volume of classwork that poured in, and they worked on it at lunch, on the bus, and even waiting for their clothes to dry in laundromats.

The other side of the paperwork problem was the increase in record work necessitated by the increase in enrollment and in class turnover (to be discussed later). There were more people to be enrolled and transferred, more grades to be recorded, more people to receive standardized tests, more notations to be put on records and much, much more.

Most teachers agreed that the teaching became more tiring as the classes grew larger. They found themselves more depleted at the end of the day, and less able to give proper effort to grading the ever mounting number of papers. Some teachers maintained that this depletion was responsible for them being home sick more during the year — which is an important point if true, because both teacher and class loose if the teacher isn't present in school. Also, with more work to do, teachers who are overtired are not likely to be able to work as fast, to say nothing of working even faster.

Teachers also said that teaching split-rooms which were overcrowded required much more work. The overcrowding increased the number of split-rooms, rooms where more than one semester grade is taught; and this doubled the preparation and effort of teaching. It also doubled the discipline problem, for the teacher had to be alert to disturbances in the group she was not teaching and teach a group of children at the same time. (One of the prime discipline treatments for this sort of classroom disturbances — isolation — was impossible in the overcrowded rooms, and teachers regretted this a good deal.)

The fire department also was unhappy with the overcrowding of the



school. There were too few entrances to permit rapid egress from the building during drills. The necessary use of extra chairs and tables and movable desks in addition to the fixed seats made it impossible to clear the room quickly because aisles were blocked or reduced in width.

Another sore point arose in connection with the delegation of classroom duties. Many teachers had adopted the custom of appointing children to all sorts of classroom jobs with the theory this keeps them occupied and too content to be troublemakers. With so many in the class, the competition for the few jobs became very intense and somewhat dangerous. A simple request will bring an avalanche of eager children all convinced they are the best for the job. Yet, oddly enough, in the upper grades there seemed to be an increased apathy toward doing the same thing, a sort of lethargy, and even rising from the desk seemed to require all a student's strength.

## II

### Student Turnover

At Erehwon School teachers commented they became accustomed to having new students enter the room and leave at any time during the semester. Turnover in the school had never even been considered before; it had been rare when a new student entered the school in any other way than by beginning in kindergarten and leaving by graduating.

Now families, large families, began to come into the school at any time during the semester to enroll their children. There was also a large percentage of families who stayed only a semester or less before moving on, only to return again a few months later.

In the 1961-62 school year, Erehwon School processed a total of 916 transfers. Of these, 505 were transfers of incoming students and 411 were those of pupils transferring out. This represents a turnover of 82% of the student body, although many pupils who were counted transferring in were again counted transferring out. In a school where turnover had been negligible this was a shocking change to some teachers.

The families are larger -- much larger. There are many children to be enrolled. The record so far is a family that placed one or more children in each grade in the school -- a total of fourteen new students in one swoop. And on the same day, eleven children in another family came in.

High enrollment and transiency also brought with it another problem -- enrollment by those living outside the district. There was so much of this that finally proof of residence, such as a rent receipt, had to be brought in with the transfer. Teachers became detectives in discovering who didn't live in the district. They watched as they drove to school to see if some of the school's membership were riding bicycles into the district from somewhere beyond it. Teachers coming to school in buses checked their fellow travelers for familiar classroom faces. And living with grandmother or auntie didn't help, except in two very special cases.

### III

#### Abuse of Facilities

There have been several instances of abuse of the building and the facilities. Bottles of ink and paint have been thrown against the building creating large stains. On occasion writing and obscene drawings have been

found on corridor walls and on sidewalks around the school. Bulletin boards and wall displays have been defaced.

Washrooms have had their ceilings decorated with wet paper and had facilities jammed with paper or marbles. Windows and slate walls in the washrooms have been chipped or broken.

Room facilities have been defaced with obscene pictures and words on desks, walls, and bulletin boards. Outlines of hands and shoes were impressed on the painted walls and ledges. Bits of enamel and nail polish decorated desks, and gum and left-over pieces of candy were put on and under desks and on desk seats, waiting for someone or something to get stuck on them. This "filthy" practice is upsetting to the teachers and especially so to the victims -- when the teachers are not the victims, that is.

#### IV

#### The Addition

In Chapter I it was remarked that the Erehwon School had an addition built onto it. This was done during the 1961-62 school year. The construction consisted of five rooms added to one side of the second floor of the original building and a two-story addition at one end of the school with four rooms on each floor. Also, the original library room was replaced with additional washroom facilities on the second floor. The addition cost \$220,871.00 or \$631.06 per pupil, and the total cost for the addition and improvements was \$473,750.80.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Teachers' Meeting - May, 1962. At the same time it was announced that land behind the school had been purchased at a cost of \$238,875.00 for a second addition and playground.

To say that this construction was upsetting to faculty and students would be a masterpiece of understatement. Almost every teacher and area in the school was affected by the alterations. The library was moved, book by book, to the adjustment teacher's office and squeezed into the little space available. The results of this have already been discussed.

One schoolyard was closed off cutting out outdoor recess for the year and forcing all the children to assemble, line up, and enter from one unpaved schoolyard less than a quarter of a block in size. The pandemonium in such a place when populated with between 900 and 1,100 children can well be imagined. There was little room for play which led to much running around and "busting" through lines with total disregard for people knocked down or hurt. Above the whole yard was a cloud of dust raised by many busy feet. To hope for rain was worse, because after a rain the schoolyard became a huge lake, due to a clogged sewer drain in the center, and no one could line up in the muck around the edges. On rainy days the children were admitted and lined up in the halls until they could be passed to their rooms.

The kindergartners and first graders lined up in the alley which was closed to traffic, to protect them from the confusion in the yard, to reduce the crowd (it wasn't noticeable), and to get them to their rooms first. Teachers of these grades spoke of the problems they had keeping the younger children away from dangerous areas and machines, leading the lines around areas of construction, and always reminding the children to watch out and not get hurt.

Some rooms had to go down the alley from the schoolyard — the length of the school — and go inside at the far entrance to get inside on time, and

here there was still another problem. This entryway was only half open. The rest was partitioned off because of construction work, creating one more bottleneck. In one case all rooms had to be dismissed at this entrance at noon while the afternoon shift classes were coming in the same way. The congestion was terrible. Teachers who were never ruffled lost their heads completely.

Inside the building there was as much confusion. For several days classes on the second floor halted as doorways for the new rooms were pierced through the walls from the inside with pneumatic hammers and electric drills. Smoking, whistling, shouting workmen abounded in the corridors. It became routine to have one of the men enter a room to find a socket to plug in some electric device. Water and electricity were cut off regularly. A pall of dust and heavy odor hung over the corridor continuously. Because of the open walls, brisk winter winds came inside. Plastering scaffolding in the corridors forced lines to pass in single file, which created a disastrous fire drill once when one exit was closed and all rooms had to go the length of the hall.

The first floor rooms below the construction had the continuous noise of tramping feet above them in addition to other loud sounds when heavy objects were dropped on the roof. The rooms leaked in the rain once the protective tar and gravel were removed to put down flooring. All day loads of bricks and other materials whizzed up past these rooms on construction lifts, giving one teacher the idea (never put into action) of having drill work in various subjects put along the sides of the lift so the children would learn something as they watched the never ending procession.

Discipline and classroom control were more difficult with the construc-

tion added to the mushrooming enrollment. Also, some other problems were inherent in the situation and new regulations had to be enforced. Children had to sign in and out of the classrooms if they went or were sent anywhere in case there was any accident. If they were gone too long, others were sent after them, also signing in and out. Tacks, nails, and pieces of wood and wire in the hall were snatched up by eager hands and collected by teachers.

Teachers reported, when interviewed, that they had suffered very little under these conditions and that their teaching had continued with virtually no trouble. One lower grade teacher even built a whole social studies lesson unit out of the situation. There were distractions, and there was noise; but the teaching went on just as always.

There was also some praise for the students who "responded pretty well" to the whole thing. They were reported as "somewhat nervous" under the circumstances, but teachers felt that the ideas of new rooms and of getting off shift helped them adjust well.

Benefits also accrued because of construction. Textbook funds were increased and delivery speeded up. New and better furniture and equipment arrived quickly and with a minimum of effort. These factors also brightened some of the less pleasant aspects of the situation.

## V

### Conclusion

Thus, the change brought with it other changes at Erehwon School. Overcrowding, construction, and the attendant problems put admitted pressures on the teachers. However, it would appear that it did not influence their

teaching in any way, and there is no direct measure that would indicate otherwise.

In teacher - teacher relations there were changes, however. In the expansion and going on shift which followed the change the number of teachers expanded and nearly doubled in size. No longer did every teacher know every other teacher well -- many were known only by sight, and sometimes an assigned teacher was asked who she was substituting for. There was a break-down in communications due to this increase, and sometimes it took two or three days for some teachers to hear gossip about other parts of the building as compared with the same number of hours before.

Apparently, Erehwon School escaped from this very trying period in its adjustment to the change with the barest minimum of upset and adjustment to the faculty or to the building itself.

## CHAPTER V

### THE TEACHER AND HIS ADJUSTMENTS

Again the information contained herein came from the teacher interviews of September and October, 1962. In this case, the responses to the questions contained in the section of the interview entitled "Teacher and Adjustments" (see appendix) furnished the needed information.

#### I

#### The Teachers' Feelings About the Change

Although the teachers expressed themselves individually on aspects of their adjustments to the change, certain basic trends emerged and basic differences in attitude also showed up due to background, experience, and professional objectivity.

It should be borne in mind that in this area there is an emotional response as well as a professional one and that both are important in that they are both called into play in the classroom situation. All material in this section should be tempered with that knowledge before it can properly be interpreted.

The majority of teachers, because of their long and close association with the families in the neighborhood, were not happy about the change. They regarded it as a shame, as an inevitable thing, but something they would rather not have had happen.



Many teachers dwelt on the inevitability of the change. They remarked that they saw it coming. Yet 72% of the teachers interviewed said they were not transferring to another school in spite of their unhappiness. Apparently there is a strong feeling of professional responsibility present. As one teacher significantly stated it, "This problem confronts the teacher in such a situation: 'Do I owe it professionally to the children to stay and help or leave, knowing my replacement will not be as good?' For every time the Negroes move into an area the good teachers go and less capable ones, ones who are looking only for a sinecure, come in."

Also reported were feelings that the Negro children had to be adequately educated if this was to continue to be a decent city, but flooding a school and taking over as they have engenders hard feelings and draws deep lines of conflict. Another teacher stated, "The community needed to change and grow, but the original residents didn't like being pushed out."

Surprisingly, a large number of the unhappy teachers proved to be so only because they wished they could do more with and for the children, and that they were frustrated considering what they used to do with classes in the school. They indicated they have accepted the change and the poorer quality work that accompanied it.

The newer teachers in the school regard the change as good experience. They feel it alerts a teacher to the problems in education. Some say they like the challenge.

## II

## Changes in Attitude

Teachers reported that as the change occurred they became less prejudiced and began to accept and help the new students. They realized that these children were children first and foremost and that all kids were alike -- some were good, some bad, some average.

The teachers said they became more sympathetic, more aware of the needs of these children as the change continued. They tried a warmer, more personal approach to get to the children because they were not as easy to reach as the white students had been. (More on this subject will be said later.) This approach, however, also hurt the teachers for they found that getting involved with the children was very "draining" on their strength. They did not want to be mothers or mother-figures, primarily, for these pupils; they had come to teach them. So there was a backfire in this desire to relate closely to the children and provide more for them ("leaning over backwards" was the way it was expressed).

Teachers found the work of the new students to be of a poorer quality than they were accustomed to, and it was frequently found to be seriously below the grade level of the student. They realized that much of this was due to a lack of background in the home and at poor quality schools, but it was still regarded as a new experience to have pupils who lacked the originality, creativeness, and industry of the white pupils the teachers were accustomed to. One teacher became ill because the students didn't progress or leap for assignments the way they previously had in her class.

The teachers tried very hard to keep up the standards of the school, but they found that they could not do so. They said that the standards could not be maintained because the goals of the children were not high enough. A few teachers refused to give in and ran into a stiff problem at promotion time, but overall standards were lowered when it became apparent the new children just couldn't achieve the performance standards the school desired. This adjustment was a very difficult one for the teachers to make -- and some even now are fighting it, although they agree it's an impossible task.

### III

#### Changes in Methods

The realization of the poorer quality of work the new students were capable of led to a revision of methods. In general these revised methods consisted of simplification and repetition of school work. "More explaining, less expecting," was the way one teacher put it.

The first basic quality of the new methods was repetition. Directions had to be given slowly and repeated ad infinitum. Explanations had to be briefer and more explicit and the words used to explain had to be picked from the words the children were familiar with. It was impossible to explain things as easily as it had been done before. Directions for the most routine assignments had to be repeated, reaffirmed, and reclarified a number of times. Work proceeded at a slower pace.

Drill work was employed to a great extent. Teachers who found they could not explain something to their class logically after dozens of tries resorted to drill to try and drive home principles. Oftentimes, it might be

added, these drill subjects were things which should have been taught in earlier grades.

New gimmicks and new games had to be devised by teachers to get a point or lesson across. More visual aids were used. This also served the reciprocal duty of enlarging the pupils background and acquainting the teacher with the background of the pupil -- a background they were unfamiliar with because of their social class.

Teachers also resorted to a more emotional approach to both instruction and discipline -- although it was in some cases used as a last resort. It was generally felt that the children responded to this sort of discipline in an explosive and unpredictable way. A child who needed a little push in the right direction would go far the other way under such treatment. On the other hand, some of the pupils seemed totally unmoved by such tactics. As far as instructional uses of this approach went, it seemed to have a salutary effect except, again, for a few who were totally unmoved by it.

Instructional emphasis centered around basic subjects. Fundamentals were stressed -- often at a grade level above that where the material was taught. Language arts were stressed. Homework and schoolwork needed close supervision and checking. Homework, as a matter of fact, was dropped in many rooms because of its quality. Group work was used as a device to get pupils to work with others of similar abilities and to get all of the class to participate in the work. A lot of individual attention was required by each student.

Efforts to get over the basics of education and an increased problem in regard to classroom control cut down on enrichment. Teachers agreed on this and were very unhappy about it as well. Many felt they just didn't have time

to teach. The general tenor of remarks indicated an air of frustration about the failure to accomplish as much as was desired and a similar feeling about not being able to be as permissive as the teachers would like to have been.

Many little tasks, easily done in the past proved time consuming. Discipline problems became a large sized nuisance. They also seemed to have a habit of mushrooming. What started out, in many cases, as a simple correction on a point of order built itself into a suspension case of classic proportions in no time and, by the time it was settled, both teacher and class were so shaken more valuable time was lost.

#### IV

#### Summary

Thus, teachers at the Erehwon School faced the problem of staying or transferring in a professional manner. They adjusted to the new students by lowering standards, tightening discipline, and working on fundamentals. The problems they faced were not those of racial intolerance, but the frustration of wasted time, the emotional turmoil of becoming primarily a parent substitute and the deadening feeling that they were getting nowhere.

A good part of a teacher's adjustment to this situation -- this changing school -- involved the emotional as well as the intellectual and professional makeup of the teacher, and perhaps this was the most physically draining of all.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TEACHER AND THE PUPIL

Again, as before, the teacher interviews of September and October, 1962, provided the information this chapter is based on. The material for this chapter came from questions contained in the section of the structured interview entitled "The Teacher and The Pupil" (see appendix).

#### I

#### Class IQ

There has always been a good deal of emphasis in the Erehwon School on the median IQ of the students. Over the years of the change this level gradually dropped.<sup>1</sup> However, this drop was not very extensive, not more than ten or fifteen points. It still is around 105, which is quite respectable. Unfortunately, this figure does not tell the whole story of the change as is obvious from the preceding chapters.

The IQ range is wider according to interviews. The median has not dropped only because some of the more intelligent children have left, but the greater number of new students have IQs which are low and in some cases very low. The range is widened by this factor, and the distribution of IQs piles up at the lower end of the scale.

The range of IQs runs from about 60 to 120. The top figure is lower

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<sup>1</sup>Reports at teachers' meetings over a number of semesters.

than it was when the white and, especially, the Oriental children were at the school for these children hit 140 plus with regularity. The lower level is believed to be due to the fact that special classes for low IQ children have been reduced in number in the city schools, and the ones remaining are overcrowded, perhaps with children whose mental abilities fall short of 60 on an IQ test.

The IQ difference between white and Negro is negligible according to recent research. In addition it has been established that many currently used IQ tests are culturally directed at the white population, and therefore a Negro taking such a test is at a disadvantage.<sup>2</sup> This disadvantage shows up especially at Erehwon School where there is such a poor scholastic and educational home background for the average Negro student.

## II

### The Classroom

The lack of background of the students, which has been mentioned, contributes to poorer work in class. Work is sloppy and carelessly done. Teachers are of the opinion that as the class works they get tired and lose interest and finish up carelessly — or don't finish at all. Often papers are not even handed in but, instead, crumpled up and thrown away.

There is a lack of refined work habits and study habits which is evident to all teachers. The apparent indifference or lack of attention to

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<sup>2</sup>Robert McQueen, "The Intelligence and Educational Achievement of a Matched Sample of White and Negro Students", School and Society, LXXXVIII, No. 2177 (September 24, 1960), 327-29.

directions, the poor quality of work, and the lack of organization in work that is done highlight the inadequacies of the class, not in ability, but in classroom training.

Teachers also find that independent type work, which once could be done without supervision, now must be directed and done as a class lesson. This, of course, cuts down on the amount of instruction in other areas that might be done.

Extra effort and that extra work that teachers liked at Erehwon School is lacking in all cases. This is particularly hard on the teachers because they were very much accustomed to getting a great deal of such material from the open and eager students that attended the school prior to the change.

In addition, teachers find that the papers show a lack of understanding of material. A question or exercise is completed by copying exact sentences out of a textbook. It doesn't matter if these sentences answer a question or not; if they contain the key words in the assignment, they are copied into the work. "It's as if the students were almost incapable of putting down their own thoughts", is the comment of one teacher. Indeed, there is a breakdown in communications on this level of classroom work, and this is another thing teachers must adjust to. It's impossible to talk to some of these students and try and help them solve their problems.

The short attention span shown in the classroom was also commented on by teachers. Students are restless in class and given to outbursts of noise; there is "no home training" in proper classroom behavior given to these children. There is an inability to modulate noise -- either absolute quiet must be enforced or loud noise results. The children lack interest in learning;



are not trained to listen; and have a poor reception to motivation. They walk around the room whenever they are so inclined, and fights in the room are unhappily frequent.

In many cases the children are sent to school so both parents can work. Teachers resent being baby-sitters, policemen, and nurses. The children "are and look neglected"; they are insecure and often revert to babyishness in their talk and actions, especially when they are in trouble.

The children are more volatile and are easily touched off on a rampage. Misbehavior adds a certain status to the children responsible. This creates a real discipline problem, and the teacher's personality and control are considered important factors in resisting such infractions. The fact remains, however, that the children "don't admire the right people", and this is really a problem.

Somewhat related to the above is the lack of manners evinced by the children to their peers and to their teachers which is considered both insolent and insulting. Downright refusal for no good reason is common. Teachers find the children have a "chip on their shoulder" and seem to be almost hopeful of provoking trouble. Teachers find that they must threaten to get work accomplished. The children are hard; they scoff at kindness and attempts to understand. Adjustments in the classroom must cover all of these factors.

### III

#### Outside the Classroom

Homework may or may not come in; it seems to depend on the teacher. Most teachers report they assign it, but it is a battle to collect any of it.

When it does come in, it is incomplete and incorrect and isn't worth the effort involved in collecting it.

Teachers also report there is much cheating and copying on homework with no feeling about why not. The attitude is that if homework must be done, just get anything and turn it in. The children are not anxious or equipped to work on their own.

Outside the school the children display the same traits as noted in the classroom -- noisy, fighting, pushing, shoving, disordered and the same explosive, emotional response to any situation. Rules of the school and attitudes of the faculty toward behavior are ignored or forgotten. (Occasionally some boy is pulled into the office in a highly worked-up state. He sits on the bench with his hands in ice water until he settles down.)

Among the upper graders, and among a startling number of lower graders as well, there is a superficial tendency toward adult behavior. Children smoke cigarettes in the washrooms, as well as outside the school, more with an eye toward showing off than for any pleasure they derive from the habit. One boy's father, when told his son was smoking, remarked that he was aware of it, but the menthol in the cigarettes helped the boy's sinus condition. (The cigarettes the boy carried to school were not mentholated.)

The use of vile language and vulgar implications and the presence near the school of detailed drawings of a sexual nature are apparently an accepted pattern of development for all the concern the neighborhood shows.

There is also quite a bit of undesirable physical contact between the boys and girls outside the classroom. Every now and then some boy tries to drag a girl into the washroom. One girl monitor was found crying hysterically

because a boy had unbuttoned her blouse before his actions were noted. Apparently the girl was too surprised to fight or call out herself. There are also sexual liaisons of a more intimate nature that the teachers learn about by listening to the students' gossip and, as I remarked earlier, a pregnancy or two in the upper grades per semester is not unusual. Much of this sort of thing is avoided by the teachers as it is a little too raw and a very awkward thing to try to handle in a classroom situation, but there is an awareness of what is going on.

#### IV

#### Attendance and Truancy

Absences have greatly increased since the change, especially in the lower grades. Teachers feel the children "learn to play truant at a younger age", and many are adept at faking illness. There is also a sharp rise in half-day absence, which are always viewed with suspicion by teachers.

The excuses for absences are not easy to get. It is necessary to repeatedly prod the child to bring in a note; and, then, when it does arrive, it must be carefully examined to ascertain if it was written by the parent or not. Most notes are so poorly written and ungrammatical that it is difficult to establish if, indeed, the parent wrote it. Once or twice teachers have raised the question on a very suspicious note only to find that indeed the parent did write it and is to blame for the poor penmanship and construction. This can be very embarrassing to the teacher.

Excuses for absence are more trivial, according to the teachers, and serve to light up the problems of parents. "Didn't get up" is an example of

the former and "watched the baby while I went out" an example of the latter. At one time during the change, a white boy who lived with his mother worked until late at night, despite the fact his mother was collecting money from the state for his support. The boy's home room teacher, a man, made it a practice to go over and haul the boy from bed literally and get him to school so he could be graduated at the end of the semester.

The attitude toward truancy from both the parents and the children is very poor. Truancy is considered by children "to be of no significance to the guilty party". Parents don't care as much; they don't realize the importance of daily attendance; and, sometimes, they just are so ill in the mornings they don't care. It even goes so far that parents have come into the school to berate officials about punishing their children for being truant -- truancy is the parents' business, not the school's, and the parent will take care of it. No parent has ever bothered to explain how they would know about truancy if it wasn't reported or just how they were going to take care of it. No teacher has ever asked, either, according to interviews.

There is real illness, of course, and many absences are due to various ailments. The Negro children are just as susceptible to disease as the former students; often they seem more so. Many children who are ill come to school and help spread the disease around a bit -- usually managing to include the teacher, thereby enabling her to justify a few restful days in bed, usually terribly sick. Most teachers return too soon after illness -- most children stay out until they are totally cured.

## V

## The Number of Schools the Children Have Attended

In connection with attendance it is not too far a jump to consider the number of schools attended by the pupils that have come to the Erehwon School with and since the change. Some shocking figures come to light in this investigation.

A large majority of the students in various grades have averaged more than one school attended per semester. Teachers referred to the fact repeatedly during the interviews, regarding it as one of the main reasons the children are upset and so unable to cope with the work assignments at the Erehwon School. Teachers feel that in this shifting around the children got a disconnected course of study with large gaps in it; and, also, many of the schools these children attended were of poor academic quality where the teachers are content to "hold" the children and keep them quiet without devoting any effort to teaching them. Several teachers reported having children say they weren't used to working -- "just writin' out of the reader where I was."

## VI

## Summary

In many ways the teacher is beset by adjustments that must be made in the classroom. Larger numbers of children have lower IQs -- some severely low -- and the teacher must try to help these children as well as the more intelligent and rebellious members of the class. The standards have gone down; classroom work is of poorer quality; and discipline has had to be very severe.

In fighting these attitudes, the teacher puts forth great effort, fighting not just the children's attitudes but the background and environment that is to a large extent responsible for them.

"The kids do appreciate what is done for them," said one teacher in discussing the problem, but she admitted that it was hard to reach children who took refuge (and some kind of satisfaction) in the attitude of some parents and older children in the community.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TEACHER, THE PARENT, AND THE COMMUNITY

Once again, the teacher interviews of September and October, 1962, form the basis for the material in this chapter. The section of the structured interview entitled "Teacher and Community" (see appendix) gives the questions used in writing this chapter.

#### I

#### Parental Attitudes

Earlier in this thesis the point was made that parental attitudes and influences had a great deal to do with the children's attitudes regarding the school and the teachers. In examining these factors there was a minimum of contradictory information and a general feeling that the parents are either a detrimental influence regarding these attitudes or totally ineffectual in dealing with their children. Indeed, feelings run so deep that one of the faculty maintains that white racial hatred is taught in the homes and that she can read it in the faces of many children and many parents when they come to visit.

It is not the easiest thing in the world to get parents to the school, and usually it has to be done by telephone summons. A letter home or a verbal request via the student brings very infrequent results; and voluntary visits, especially in the upper grades, are practically unheard of. Most teachers remarked on this point because they very seldom used to call parents for an

interview, and now it is a necessity if the teachers are to see the parents at all. One teacher has remarked that the parents do not come either way. She commented that phone calls have proven unsatisfactory because "you never know who you are talking to on the phone," and she has reverted to what she terms "other methods of discipline."

When a parent does come to school, according to teachers, the attitude is either "that of complete co-operation and promise of action or complete belligerence and denial of teacher's authority." Interestingly enough, there appears to be a direct ratio between the belligerence of the parents and the ability and behavior of their child; the worse the child, the more belligerent the parent.

Some parents have been extremely hostile and on a few occasions have almost attacked teachers who the parents claimed were "pickin' on their kids" (the same terms the children use, please note). The feeling that the teacher is at fault and that their children are being discriminated against is reflected by many parents. The teachers resent this attitude a great deal because they feel they are doing a hard job as best they can, and this attitude on the part of the parents makes it harder to do the job and provides less satisfaction in performing it. The teachers also resent the parents who are continually telling the teacher what she can and cannot do and informing her of their rights. Teachers say they have assorted feelings over this sort of thing, but the majority feeling is that of disgust. "We felt we were working for the children's own good before," one teacher said, "now we're just working."

It is unfortunate that the co-operative parents are not too much better in helping the teacher help their children. Many of these parents, according



to teachers, want to do the right thing but they just do not know how. They are inept at disciplining their children. Some parents come in timidly and confess they don't know what to think; they state that their children are very nice at home.

A larger number of parents promise all sorts of things -- give lip service, but there is no follow-through at home. "They are co-operative to your face at the time of the interview," one teacher said, "and there may be some carry-over, but most parents feel their duty has been fulfilled by coming over to the school."

Parents are just not concerned about the problems their children may have in school or about correcting these behavior or scholastic defects. They are not concerned; once their child is in school, their responsibility is ended.

Really co-operative parents are few and far between, and so are the children who appreciate what is being done for them. Fortunately, there are pupils -- and parents -- who take this attitude; it is this cluster that classes are built around and that many teachers regard as the one factor that keeps them going.

## II

### Parental Pressure on the Student

There was some disagreement over the question regarding parents pushing their children to get better grades. A few teachers said there was parental pressure in this regard "to some extent." One remarked that parents were grade conscious because Negroes always got low grades, and another reported there was

noticeable urging reflected in her class.

A large number of teachers indicated parents pressured their children only to pass -- to get by -- and some didn't even care about that. Sending a failure notice home, it was reported, scares some parents, but not many.

Then, of course, there is always the group that blames the teacher. There are some families, according to one interview, who are convinced that they are being discriminated against, and in such cases poor grades only increase a brooding resentment. Under such circumstances no improvement can be expected.

As far as parental pressure regarding better conduct (in reference to report card grades), the same attitudes prevail as were noted regarding parent conferences. There is a lack of carry-through at home. There is a desire to have the children improve but no real pressure -- lip service but no action. Parents pressure their children to the extent they don't want the children to cause enough trouble for the parents to have to come to school.

### III

#### Community Influences

According to teachers there is very little criticism of the school from parents or other members of the community on the whole. There is a certain lackadaisical attitude noted in some quarters, and there are some who maintain a defensive attitude and are opposed or, more frequently, frigidly indifferent to the school.

Some members of the community dislike the school because, according to reports, they are supersensitive about their children being taught by white

teachers. And some are unhappy about some of the rules such as promptness.

There is also a difference between the school regulations and the way the community regards the school. As it is a public building, the Negro residents assume they are free to come in at any time to get out of the rain or to use the washroom facilities. Ideas like this were quite a surprise to the faculty, and it required a certain amount of alertness and guarding in the halls to make sure the children (and teachers) would be safe from adults "dropping in" for any or no reason at all.

When the school went on half-day classes or "shift" for a few months about a year ago, there was some understandable criticism according to teachers, but very little. The fact that the addition was being built assuring that full time classes would be operating shortly was a definite factor in calming the community. The real concern actually came from two sources: the more educated people in the community and the families where the parents were working and were not home, in which case the children were unsupervised and free to roam around the greater part of the day.

Certain Negro organizations have been active in the neighborhood. It is interesting to note that different organizations have been at work and promote different attitudes. One group, for instance, urged parents to participate more in school activities and get their children to school every day and on time while another group told the parents their rights and what they should expect (or insist on) from the school.

One Negro organization placed the first Negro residents in the area. The mother of the first boy enrolled came in primed with all sorts of proofs of residence and a big button showing her affiliation to the organization. She

insisted, successfully, on sitting in her son's classes for the first few weeks to see how the children would accept a Negro as a fellow student. (The teacher claimed that she didn't mind having the mother in the room, but other teachers were outraged.) Apparently the child was accepted all right because the mother finally decided she was satisfied and discontinued her attendance.<sup>1</sup>

Another organization created quite a bit of tension throughout the school. They had meetings every Sunday, and every Monday the students were riled up and practically beyond control. By Friday they were settled down, but Sunday was another meeting and then came Monday again.

This organization is believed to be the one that told parents what they and their children were entitled to. Parents, fortunately in small numbers, came to school and tried to have their children transferred to a not too distant all-white school. They were given the benefit of a long explanation of district lines and rules from the central office, and they left quietly.

In one case, a boy in the upper grades demanded that the school furnish his notebook paper, pencils, paints, chalks and other miscellaneous items he was expected to have. He maintained "the school's supposed to do that." His teacher asked him who told him this, and he steadfastly answered, "I was told." It took over a month before the boy finally was equipped for classroom work.

Some rebellious pupils also used this organization as a threat to teachers who were disciplining them. The students told teachers they would report them to the organization and have them fired. This usually set the

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<sup>1</sup>No one sent a truant officer after her. She is "still in our hair" however. Her son is still attending the Erehwon School, and she is an officer in the P.T.A. The son is a discipline problem, it might be added.

teachers really going, and the student — and presumably his family — learned that the organization was not as all powerful as it claimed.

The school has no trouble with religious groups. The self-appointed minister that was mentioned some chapters back used to come to the school with parents from his congregation, but he proved very ineffectual. At last report he had gotten into his salmon-colored Cadillac and gone elsewhere.

A white minister also used to come to the school to "protect" children who were being prejudiced against. On one occasion he kept a child in school until the matter almost went to court. Lately the teachers haven't seen him around either.

There are rumors that ministers allow many groups and clubs with rather unpleasant reputations to meet at their churches, and one church recently ran a long series of talks on desegregation activities in the south and north, but these have had little apparent affect on the school and are only reported as additional background material.

#### IV

#### Children's Organizations

There are no gangs, clubs, or teams in evidence among the children of Erehwon School. There are groups of boys and of girls who usually are together, but they are not organized. There used to be fan clubs boosting various recording, screen, and television stars, but these have not been as apparent lately, at least no teacher mentioned them in the interviews.

A decided difference of opinion existed among teachers as to the value of membership in Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Some teachers say there is an

improvement in attitude, more interest, and a sense of belongingness found in these children. Other teachers say they find it is no influence at all. Perhaps the best answer is the qualified comment, "Scouting has a positive influence for sincere scouts," -- the insincere scouts do not seem to benefit from it much.

## V

### The P.T.A.

Since the change, the P.T.A. of Erehwon School has definitely declined in active membership. Estimates indicate it has about thirty per cent of its former membership. It does not have as many functions every year as it used to, and the activities lack zest.

Teachers feel that this decline is not entirely due to lack of interest. The parents of these children are often busy with younger babies and/or are working. Then, too, the lack of background and being attuned to this sort of organization is considered to be a factor. The officers are very much liked and respected, but the parents just can't or don't come out in numbers. Of course, this lack of participation does harm the effectiveness of the P.T.A. (and reduces their contributions to the school's petty cash fund).

The chief attraction of the P.T.A. meetings, according to the faculty, is the coffee and cake served after the meetings. The interest of the "cookie crowd" seems to be mainly gossip; and when the teachers come down after school, they have to talk to each other or stand around quietly. Before the change the parents used to crowd around teachers in order to talk to them about their children.

## VI

If the Change Had Been to Lower Class White Children  
Rather Than Negro,  
Would the Effect Have Been the Same?

The above question was asked of the teachers interviewed. The answers were somewhat contradictory, but very interesting and worth reporting.

In many ways, teachers felt, there would be little difference had the change been to lower class white families. There would be the same large families and same lack of background. The numbers alone would be enough to create a problem, it is not due to Negroes. It is likely that the transiency problem would be the same as would other problems related to this type of society.

However, there were several comments to the contrary. It was felt that with white families the parental control would be tighter, and there would not be anti-white feeling. Then, too, the Negro has his race against him. There would have been less of an exodus of Orientals if white people had moved in, and standards might not have gone down.

Most important, though, is the fact that teachers found they had to learn to teach -- and what to say to Negro children. And, of course, the Negroes have the resentment that was mentioned -- the chip on the shoulder.

## VII

## Conclusion

The attitudes of parents, as described in this chapter, are reflected in the children. The children resent the intrusion of the school on their

lives and resent the teachers — the white teachers, who are considered by them as being "prejudiced". They also resent the fact that the school is the force that causes their parents to pressure them for better grades.

This hostility is fed by certain neighborhood organizations, while other organizations push toward co-operation with the school. The child is naturally confused.

Perhaps the best summary of the Negro parent as reflected by the neighborhood of the Erehwon School is found in the following, well defined statement by an interviewed teacher:

- "1. The parents are not as interested in education as before the change.
2. There is a strong feeling about the white teacher ever since the social revolution. The Negroes are no longer second class citizens and are very demanding.
3. When a Negro child is criticized by a white teacher, the parents get on the defensive and become hostile."

This is possibly what has happened at the Erehwon School — and is what the teachers feel.



## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The picture that has been painted in the last several chapters is very dark. Actually, the Erehwon School is considered by members of the faculty -- and administrators and supervisors -- to be one of the luckiest and least upset of changing schools.<sup>1</sup>

If this is true, and if the students at the Erehwon School are not the so-called 'dregs' of the social ladder, then it is rather obvious that the adjustments the teachers must make are those of trying to blend their middle class values, ideals, and beliefs with the attitudes and learning potential of their lower class students.

It is a well documented fact that the teacher, "adjusted to an Anglo-Saxon middle class way of life," is unable to relate well to children of the lower class.<sup>2</sup> However, it seems incomprehensible to assume from this that the teacher must descend to a lower social level in order to function properly in the classroom. Therefore, there is some sort of adjustment that must be made by the individual teacher to the individual situation that will serve a dual

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<sup>1</sup>Interviews with various private sources.

<sup>2</sup>John H. Niemeyer, "Splitting the Social Atom," Saturday Review, XLII (September 12, 1959), and, National Education Association, Education and the Disadvantaged American, A Report Prepared by the Educational Policies Commission of the NEA of the United States and the American Association of School Administration (Washington, D.C., 1962), p. 20.

purpose. First, this adjustment must permit the teacher to retain the integrity of her social class and mores; and, second, the teacher must find a way to "break-through" to the child, satisfy his needs, and raise his objectives to the level of the teacher without making him feel he is losing his individual identity or betraying his social class.

The first adjustment for the teacher that was noted in this thesis was basically an emotional one. It was the resentment against the Negroes who were moving into the Erehwon School district and disrupting the exceptionally cordial and close relationship that had existed between the families in the community and the school. For this was substituted a larger enrollment and a number of families who appeared at school to register their children and never came near the building again. There was also resentment against the lowered moral tone of the community and the physical deterioration of the neighborhood.

It would seem that this resentment was, perhaps, not as highly emotional as one might suppose — at least the author feels this way. The resentment seems to be tinged with a regret that has faded into a nostalgia for things gone by. The teachers, it will be remembered, did remark that the change was inevitable.

In other words, perhaps this adjustment which teachers made was more of an acceptance of something that they knew had been coming, and it was only the realization that the change had occurred that required getting used to.

Today, as was indicated, the teachers speak of things gone by, of old memories of the school, distant glories, the original faculty, and the students they had once. Then they dream for a moment and get up and go out to their present classes with, perhaps, a sense of loss, but no loss in integrity or

ability.<sup>3</sup>

Despite, or perhaps because of, the teachers' refusal to give up their ideals, the children did pose a problem. Unused to discipline and immune to punishment which lacked follow-through at home in most cases, the children proved to be very much of a problem. It required adjustment, however, on the part of the teacher -- a great adjustment.

The children could not be trusted. But is it an adjustment to remember never to leave anything of value in the open and to always take your purse with you? Is it an adjustment to accept the fact that eighth grade girls in an elementary school are pregnant? Is it an adjustment to have students cursing or attacking a teacher? Is it an adjustment to find children in the classroom virtually starved? Is it an adjustment to have to delete a primary song about a pussy-willow because these young children snicker at the use of a slang sexual term?

Yes, these are adjustments; adjustments all of one kind -- adjustments to students who have acquired from parents and from environment a totally different attitude toward and behavior pattern in school than many of the teachers in Erehwon School had ever dreamed of. If a shock can foster an adjustment, this is exactly what happened. Even the men teachers confessed they were somewhat appalled at some of the things these new students did and said.

Yet teachers did adjust. By not hearing what was said and not seeing

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<sup>3</sup>Observed and interpreted by author during interviews and other informal times during the teaching day.

certain things and by omitting certain teaching devices and by creating new teaching aids the several crises that came with the new children were cut down, although never stopped, and the teaching continued.

There were other emotional adjustments that had to be made. Once again there was resentment and frustration that was reported -- the frustration of wasted time. Actually, however, in the opinion of the author there has been no actual adjustment to this particular frustration. There is an acceptance of the fact that these children are not capable of the work and unable to enjoy the enrichment that other classes had, but this is not necessarily the same as adjustment. There is still a general discontentment among the teachers over the lack of ability of the students, and, in spite of every effort to stimulate the children to work a little harder, there is still failure due in large measure to this lack. Lower standards, tighter discipline, and extensive work on fundamental educational skills apparently contribute to the general feeling of getting nowhere.

There has been adjustment in teachers' attitudes and efforts to be a parent substitute. At first the teachers were resentful of this dependence of the children upon them, then they tried to accept it, but finally they seem to the author (although not reported in interviews) to be hardening toward the students because they have been disappointed and hurt by continued broken promises and rejection of attempts to help the students.

In contrast, it is interesting to note that in connection with the more physical aspects of the change the teachers reported that they had no troubles and noticed no special adjustment that had to be made. They reported that the increased enrollment, lack of supplies, construction, abuse of facilities,

turnover, and increase in the work load, had "little or no effect" on their general procedures. They did admit they found the teaching more tiring. There seem to be two possible reasons for this report, both of which are interesting and worthy of consideration.

First of all, it is not inconceivable that there were great effects from these problems which the teachers adjusted to either because of experience or instinct very quickly or very gradually, and, in either case, the adjustments were not noticed. In view of some of the comments which have been reported this might well be the case. Also, it should be remembered this turmoil occurred over half a year before the interviews and a summer vacation had intervened, and this time factor might have blurred the memory and softened some of the harsher aspects of this particular part of the change.

The second possible explanation is even more interesting in the author's opinion. This part of the interview dealt mostly with the physical aspects of the change, and it is quite possible that the teachers at the Erehwon School would not need to adjust very much to these changes while the emotional adjustments commented on previously required greater and deeper adjustments and were very wearing indeed on the faculty and made a lasting impression upon them. A combination, of course, of the two explanations possibly is closest to the truth and leaves a fascinating area for consideration and discussion.

The areas of greatest adjustment and greatest concern, some of which have been touched on briefly in this chapter already, concern the teachers' adjustment to the background and environmental changes as reflected in the child and the adjustment to parental and home attitudes toward the school.

Again, it should be noticed, the situation is a highly emotional one and deals with intangibles rather than physical facts and factors about the change.

In Chapter Six there was a discussion about the lowering IQ level in the Erehwon School together with some documentation leading to the conclusion that this lowering was partly due to the IQ tests used and partly to poor home background. Other traits of the children were also discussed in connection with teacher adjustment -- poorer work, lack of interest, insolence, admiration of the wrong people, parental indifference and imitation of adult behavior.

In Chapter Seven the adults in the area were taken up. The lackadaisical community with its various pressure groups for and against the school were covered as well as could be expected. Of course there is a lot of pressure that is never exposed but makes itself felt, and there is a lot of pressure that works its way down from the upper echelons due to the influence of these same groups. The dislike of white teachers was also mentioned in connection with groups as was the decline of the P.T.A. into a "cookie crowd".

The main emphasis, however, in Chapter Seven was on the individual parents who, according to the teachers, were either ineffectual or detrimental in helping the school help their children. The urgent desire of these parents to be anywhere but in the school is still very apparent. The lip service to the teacher and the lack of carry-through has been discussed. The hostility of the parents has been mentioned as well as their effort to blame their children's failure on the teacher rather than elsewhere.

These two chapters, in the opinion of the author, do far more than show what the major adjustments of the teacher in a changing school are. They seem to be a considerable indictment of the family -- examples of what happens in a

changing school and evidence of where some of the fault lies.

It has been noted, among the families in the area, that where the parents are strict with their children and genuinely concerned, there is respect for teachers, good behavior, and industry in the class.<sup>4</sup> These parents come to school and listen, then go home and take disciplinary action, even though it sometimes entails great effort to do these things and seems to go against the grain.

But there are not enough of these strict parents who isolate their children from bad influences by keeping them at home when not in school, by denying privileges that ordinarily are permitted if the child's behavior warrants, by maintaining, even when "face is lost", a close contact with the school and faculty.<sup>5</sup> During the interviews a couple of teachers also mentioned that some of the better Negro students were leaving the school as their parents were moving. The parents have found the neighborhood is not turning out as they had hoped and are going to more stable Negro neighborhoods. These actions are conclusive proof of neighborhood deterioration and bring to a head the two questions: Can a teacher ever really adjust to a changing neighborhood if her background and professional ability are constantly challenged? And can a deteriorating, changing neighborhood be changed by a vigorous school or by any other force?

The author believes this paper has answered the first question. The teacher can adjust -- at least well enough to function extremely well -- in

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<sup>4</sup>Personal observations of author corroborated by other teachers.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with private sources living in school district.

spite of the 'handicaps' of background and ability. There are problems involved, as has been painstakingly pointed out, but these can be overcome; and the teacher can turn these 'handicaps' to advantage by using them as a standard to hold up to the children rather than as a club to hold over them. The teachers at the Erehwon School have survived the numerous challenges presented to them as recounted in this thesis and have adjusted. This adjustment has cost them a great deal in emotional and, to a lesser degree, in physical effort, and there is regret and nostalgia and occasional reversion and rebellion against the situation and acceptance of it; but the adjustment has been made, and in the classroom the work continues and some progress is made. (It is important to remember that this is the answer for one school only. In another school the answer might be different, partly different, or the same.)

As to improving a deteriorating and changing neighborhood, this question proposes many more. It seems clear (to the author) that a school cannot make this change alone -- nor can an organization. It takes the co-operation and effort of every family in the area and assistance from forces outside the area as well. There are then raised the questions of where to start -- with the present parents, the youth, or a combination of both? Which organizations do what -- what part does the school play? And, finally, will such an effort succeed and how long will it take?

These are important questions, it would seem, in view of the present crises in education, and focus on problems that have been raised by many authorities in the field, some of whom are included in the bibliography at the end of this project.

It is not the purpose of this study to attempt to answer these



questions, nor is it within the frame of reference of this thesis to endeavor to point a way. Rather, an attempt has been made to provide as vivid a portrait as possible about one aspect leading up to these questions from a source that is important but often overworked, the ignored but somehow capable elementary school teacher.

## APPENDIX

Questions used as basis for structured interview as referred to in the text:

### Background:

1. Are you a certified teacher?
2. Do you have a bachelor's degree? In what area?
3. Do you have a master's (and doctor's) degree(s)? In what area(s)?
4. How many years have you been teaching?
5. How many years have you taught in the city public schools?
6. How many years have you taught at the Erehwon School?
7. What social class do you consider yourself to be in?
8. Where do you live?
9. What kind of neighborhood is this in regard to social class?

### Situation at Present:

1. Is there any difference in parent-faculty relations since the change?
2. What reasons are there for original residents to stay in the area?
3. What reasons do new residents have to move into the area?

### The Changes in the Neighborhood:

1. What were the first signs of change you noticed?
2. How did the change progress in your opinion?
3. Were you alert to phases of the change?
4. How has the social class altered since the change?
5. Has there been an increase in relief and ADC recipients in the school since the change as reflected by your room?
6. Have you visited any homes and/or noticed any changes in the families aside from color?

### The Characteristics of Students:

1. Has the change caused any alterations in discipline?
2. If so, where did this change start (grade level estimate) and what factors contributed to it?
3. Have there been increasing cases of theft, disregard of property or other misdemeanors?

### The Teacher, the School, and the Change:

1. What kind of physical changes have appeared in the school since the change?
2. What problems and obstacles did you have during the change?

3. How did the construction affect your work?
4. How did the overcrowding affect your work?

**The Teacher and His Adjustments:**

1. How do you feel about the change?
2. Are you transferring or planning to remain at Erehwon School?
3. What adjustments did you have to make at the change regarding:
  - (a) attitude
  - (b) methods
  - (c) overall teaching and classroom operations.

**The Teacher and the Pupil:**

1. Have you noticed a change in the average IQ and/or the IQ limits of your classes in the last few years?
2. Have you noticed a change in the quality of classwork since the change?
3. Have you noticed a change in the quality of homework since the change?
4. Have you noticed any difference in classroom behavior since the change?
5. Any change in school behavior?
6. Any change in schoolyard behavior?
7. How do you account for larger memberships in rooms when the same school district area is involved and no significant new buildings have been constructed in the area?
8. Have you noticed any differences in attendance and truancy?
9. Are parents called to school or do they come on their own initiative?
10. What seems to be the general attitude of the parents to the school, faculty, and classes?

**The Teacher, the Parent, and the Community:**

1. Are parents and community representatives critical of the school?
2. Were these representatives critical when it was on shift?
3. What, if any, pressures have you felt from community organizations?
4. What, if any, influences have you noticed due to community organizations?
5. What, if any, influences have you noticed due to community religious organizations?
6. What influences come from scouts, brownies, etc.?
7. Is there much pressure from parents on grades?
8. Is there much pressure from parents on conduct?
9. Is PTA membership, participation and interest the same or different than it has been in the past?
10. Do you think that, if the change had been in social class only, rather than in both social class and race, the situation in the school would have been the same as it is under the present conditions?

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### APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by H. Sumner Brown has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

May 28, 1963  
Date

John W. Wagnish  
Signature of Adviser